



March 16, 2010

Sustainable Communities Planning Grant and Incentives Program
The Department of Conservation, Office of Sustainability
801 K Street, MS 24-01
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Members and Staff of the Strategic Growth Council:

Greenbelt Alliance is the Bay Area's advocate for open spaces and vibrant places. For over 50 years, we have worked on protecting key open space areas and making the region's cities and towns more livable and sustainable.

We strongly support directing grant funds to additional data acquisition projects. Many regional and local governments lack sufficient information to inform decisions regarding where and how to grow and develop.

One example of this is a lack of reliable and current data on what open lands are conserved through fee ownership and easements. Improvement of this data source will be valuable because:

- 1) It aides cities and other urban areas that seek to provide adequate park space as part of their strategies to build more livable and sustainable residential and business areas. If every city can draw on information that defines the total of their protected open space, they can be more effective in rallying citizen support for sustainability plans. Many cities don't have access to data beyond their own open space holdings, and many urban places in California possess open land resources owned by more than a single city.
- 2) It enables more effective regional sustainability plans. In the Bay Area, both Greenbelt Alliance's "Golden Lands" strategy for conservation and our "Grow Smart Bay Area" initiative (with its detailed vision for residential infill development) rely on having solid data for existing parks and open space areas. Having such data facilitates improved intra-regional coordination and policy development.
- 3) While the current inventory from GreenInfo Network's CPAD data set is very thorough, it needs improvements and updating to be fully accurate, including information on where open space easements are located.
- 4) Finally, having good protected areas data supports local land trusts and related groups who are working to protect biodiversity in the face of climate change, by helping better plan for migration routes and other adaptations.

In closing, we believe the protected lands data is a critical research need for future strategic growth planning for the state of California. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Reyes, Policy Director

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